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Foundation for Religion.



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FOUNDATION FOR RELIGION.

By
Adelantine
William M. Salter.
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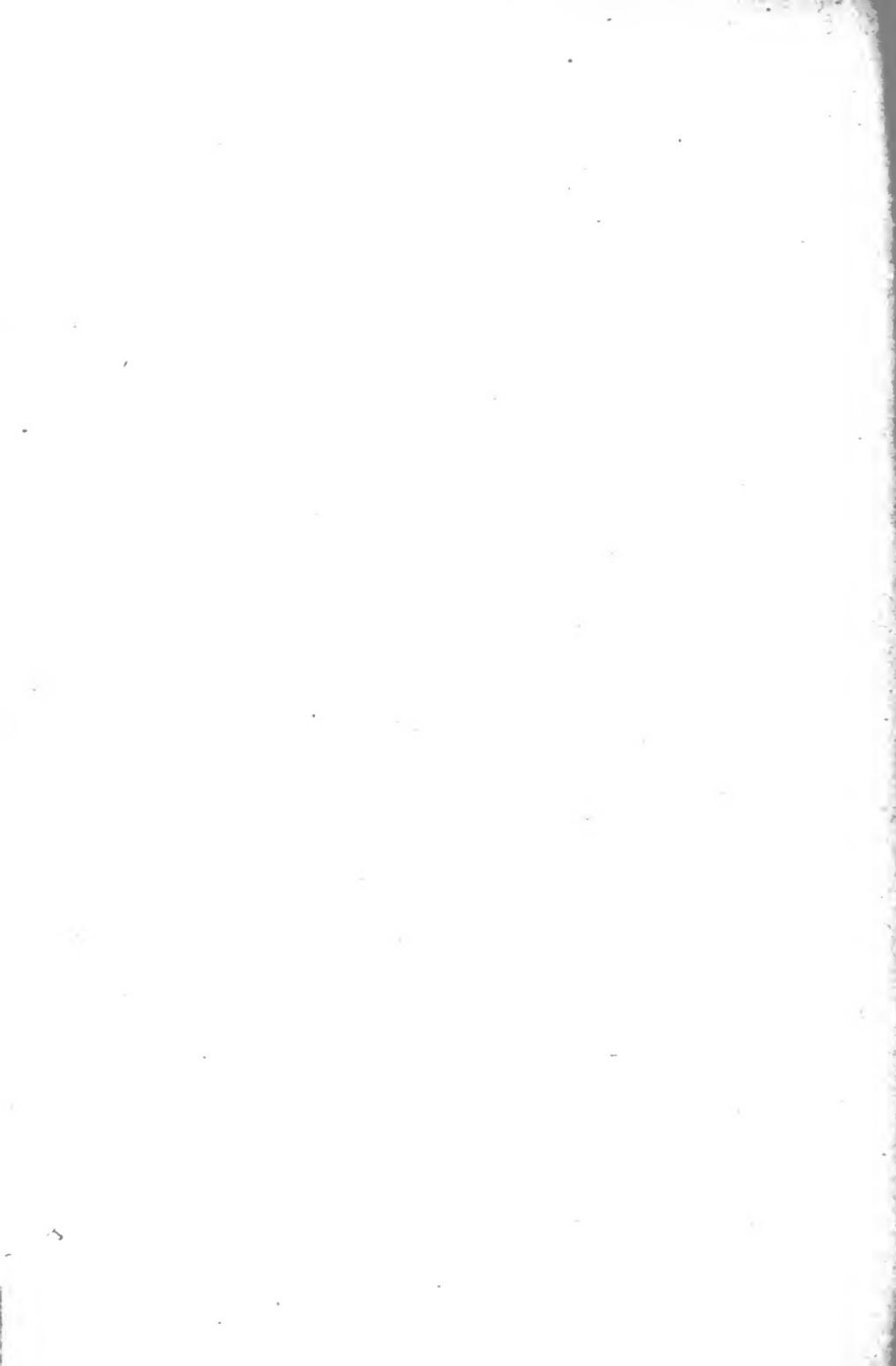
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ON A FOUNDATION FOR RELIGION.

INTRODUCTORY.

THERE are some of us at the present time who can no longer assent to many of the intellectual positions of Christianity. We do not so much attack as feel ourselves unable to occupy or defend them. We have little sympathy with a belligerent infidelity or a dogmatic atheism, but rather a natural reverence for what the world has counted holy ; and in many Christian doctrines we find not a little to sympathize with and respect. Our inability, however, extends far. We are children of this world and of this age. While not seeking for imperfections and errors in Scripture or the teachings of the Church, historical criticism will not allow us to deny their existence ; and, regarding Scripture and Church as human products, we cannot, though finding in them much that is true and helpful, look to them as authorities and rest upon them, least of all in matters of involved theological and philosophical speculation. Modern science has, moreover, given us a new view of the constitution of things. The common Christian conception has been that the world, in the entire circle of its phenomena and forces, is created and dependent ; the order and adaptations of means to ends that we witness are due to the ordering and designing intelligence of the Creator ; and duty has its sanction as being a revelation and command of His will. But science makes us think of the world in and of itself as a whole. It does not so much deny the existence of God as find him, in the above-mentioned sense, unnecessary. All the signs of dependence in the world about us it believes can be adequately accounted for

without going out of the circle of known or knowable phenomena and forces. Each individual existence is dependent, but not on something apart from the whole sum of individual existences, but on such other individual existences themselves. All together they make up a whole, but we cannot call this whole dependent, and such language would be self-contradictory ; for if dependent, the whole must depend on something beside itself, and that something would thus stand out beyond, and would have to be included before the true conception of the whole would be reached. The world, so taken, we cannot then call an effect, or predicate of it a beginning : these are terms applicable to the parts ; the whole stands self-centred and complete, comprehending all effects and beginnings within itself.

Further, the order of the world seems to us not a thing conferred, but inherent and necessary. If matter were essentially inert and forceless, and once so existed, it would be a natural supposition that the wonderful combinations of material particles in the crystalline and vegetable and higher orders of being resulted from the controlling hand of a superior Intelligence. But this is a gratuitous and unfounded conception. Matter is attended with forces of various kinds, and is perhaps in the last analysis itself force, that needs only certain conditions to enable it to manifest its active power. And these forces we regard as competent to the production of all the varied phenomena of the world ; and as we must think of them as always existing, we have no occasion to suppose that they had an author, or were constituted or endowed so that they might produce their results. The smooth pebble we find on the beach cannot be other than smooth ; the crystal is due to the co-operation of forces that could issue in no other than just these regular forms.

And the adaptations we see, we are constrained to believe have a similarly natural origin and necessity. The prevailing hues of nature are fitted to the eye. What discomfort should we suffer if the grass and the foliage of the trees were of a

bright red color! But does it not occur to us that the eye is as it is just because of the actual character of its environment, and that if this should change, the eye would of itself seek to newly adapt itself? If man were indeed a new creation suddenly introduced into the world, the harmonies of his being with the external constitution of things could hardly be accounted for save on the supposition of some intelligence in the Power that had introduced him. But the aspect of the matter changes when we think of him as a development, a new and higher form of forces already existing. Then we see that he could have become what he is only by means of these harmonies; that they are not adventitious, but a part, and a necessary part, of his very being. The adaptations remain,—we simply give to them a different interpretation, and assign a different origin. It is sometimes said that both interpretations may be true; that design and necessity may coexist; that efficient causes do not exclude final causes: and the examples of human workmanship are referred to, in which both conspire to produce the result. And the possibility of this we may freely concede. But when we ask for actual evidence, the difference between the products of man's hand and the works of nature is manifest. In the former case, we know that thought and design exist; in the latter, we do not. Indeed, the very considerations which are frequently said to induce us to assign the watch to an origin in design would seem to negative such a necessity in regard to nature's products. For, it is said, the watch is too complicated and too visibly adapted to human use to be the result of nature's forces, which are blind and aimless. When, however, with a thought of the claims of theology, we turn to the eye, which no human hand has shaped, and the action of the natural forces in producing which we can almost trace, we forget the basis of our former reasoning, and connect with the forces a superhuman intelligence and design. Our connecting of design with the watch has, however, to our minds, a better basis than the conception of natural forces as blind

and aimless,— a conception for which we have as little warrant as for the opposite one, that they act with intelligence and design such as we possess. Really, we know in the first place that the watch has a human origin, and, knowing this, we naturally see in the complicatedness of its structure and its adaptedness to human ends a manifestation of human intelligence. But if we could trace it to purely natural (we mean non-human) causes,—if we could see it growing as the flower grows, or could have evidence that it had so grown in the past,—the matter would stand differently. And in the case of anything we find in a locality or as the remains of a time in which we did not know that man existed, our view of it depends upon whether we can suppose it due to the operation of natural forces, or must assign to it a special human origin. In the latter case, we ascribe any adaptedness to human ends that we may find in it to design: in the former, though the adaptedness exists, we feel no such compulsion. For, as before said, there are instances of adaptation not of human origin, and they are often more striking and in every way greater than any that are the result of human contrivance. The world is worthy of an origin in intelligence, and is, indeed, beyond all that our intelligence could ever have planned. But the question is, Do we *know* of any intelligence beside our own? do we know, even, of any origin to the world, in a total sense? have we any reason to believe there is a Power, aside from it, which created and constituted it? If so, then in the adaptations of the world we could see design; but if not, they must stand of themselves, insufficient to prove their supernatural origin, yet having a firm place in the world's order, and testifying to a Power in the world more than human, and greater, subtler, we might almost say wiser, than our intelligence. And we apply the same method to the phenomena of our moral nature. We can no longer suppose conscience to have an exceptional Divine origin, nor invest it with supernatural sanctions. It is a product of experience; as we may say, the voice of the accumulated

experiences of men in the past as to right and wrong conduct ; and it may be added, is thus not without a certain natural dignity and authority.

The conception of personal Deity is then lost to us, not through any arbitrariness of ours, not that we have any hostility to it, not even that we have any positive arguments against it ; it may, for all our knowledge or lack of knowledge, be true : but simply from a discovery that the facts upon which it has ordinarily been based have, to our minds, been misinterpreted. It has faded away, just as we can imagine the ancient mythology faded away to the minds of the later Greeks and Romans. But this conception lies at the basis not only of Christianity, as commonly interpreted, but, to the minds of many, of all religion. It is not an uncommon opinion, even among the thoughtful, that without faith in a personal God religion is impossible. How can we be grateful, it is asked, if all comes to us not from a free-will, but of necessity ? What reasonable basis is there for submission in trial and in the face of death, save that these are ordered by a Supreme Intelligence ? How can we pray, save as we have a distinct faith in a personal Hearer and Answerer ? And what meaning is there in faith or basis for hope, save as Infinite Wisdom and Love are ruling the world ? Accordingly it is probably not infrequently the case that along with doubts as to the Divine personality, there comes the abandoning of any effort to cherish religious feeling. Duty in its ordinary human references is by no means disallowed,— honor, kindness, charity, courtesy, and much that makes life worth living, still exist ; but relations such as men call religious are gradually lost out of sight, if not, indeed, deemed practically impossible. Our inquiry then is, Must this be so ? Is religion for us, with our altered intellectual conceptions, no longer possible ? And by religion we do not mean any new thing. Nor do we seek to identify it with morality in the ordinary narrow significance of that term. We have rather in mind certain sentiments which reach out beyond

merely human objects, which have formed a part of all the religions of the world, and which, though far from being the whole of religion, will yet be generally allowed to be themselves distinctively religious,—we mean gratitude, submission, prayer, faith, and hope. These have usually been directed to personal objects ; and hence our question is, Are they really dependent upon those objects ? In the eyes of many they are, and so the foundation of religion is placed in an involved and *what is* to us a doubtful intellectual conception.

It is our purpose to show that these sentiments may arise even in the absence of such conception ; that so far as they are dependent upon knowledge, it is knowledge that is sure and immediate ; but that they have a deeper rooting in the heart and moral life of man, and thus form a foundation on which we may surely rest, despite any purely speculative difficulties.

^x Italics shd. be "to me"

GRATITUDE.

It cannot be denied that the obligation to thankfulness is heightened in our minds by the consciousness that the gift is the manifestation of the love of some person. In our ordinary moods, what comes to us in the regular course of things excites no particular emotion. For a bunch of flowers given us by a friend we return our thanks ; but for the same flowers found along the road-side we hardly think of being grateful. Plainly this difference of feeling would to a great extent vanish, if we could believe and realize the common Christian view that everything in nature is the direct gift of the love of God. And on the other hand, we cannot deny that the order of nature may be dwelt upon in such a hard, unfeeling way, its beauty and blessedness so overlooked, that hardly any sentiment in return can be awakened in us. Are then we, who cannot accept the former view, shut up to the latter, and for the blessings that are not from a human hand can we have no thankfulness ?

The world is not of our creation. We find ourselves in it, and have vital relations to it ; but it existed long before we, and our relations are rather of dependence than origination. It—and by the world we mean the sum total of forces, human included—brought us into being, and it does not leave us to ourselves, but continually sustains us. What should we be, not only without parents, but without light and air and food? It is evident that the “we” only has meaning, as there is a “not-we,” and that the latter is, as it were, constantly entering into and constituting us. We indeed do something for ourselves ; but is it not for the most part simply appropriating, or shaping and preparing for use, elements already in existence ?

We gather the ripe grain, but have we made it ripe? We provide for ourselves food and clothing, but do we make them or simply give form to materials which great Nature has already furnished? And the power with which we do what we do, though we call it our own,—is it of our creation? Whence come the strong hand and arm, the thinking, planning brain? So far from being due to us, the mystery of their formation we can hardly fathom.

Now in the consciousness of this dependent relation to the Universe there arises a peculiar feeling. Ordinarily we do not possess this consciousness in any vivid way. Indeed, when all goes smoothly with us, we hardly separate ourselves from the world about us, and are scarcely aware that we are not self-centred. But when we think, and, more, when we realize, that we are thus dependent, that we have nothing we have not received and verily are what Powers greater than we have made us,—more than thoughtful, are not the springs of feeling touched, are we not grateful? Yes, not only are we created and sustained, but the world teems with more than we need. There is beauty that delights the eye and stirs the heart,—the earth is fair, the heavens are radiant; and we have thus a sense of the largeness and generosity of the World, that cannot content itself with a mere intellectual recognition, but breaks out in all the joyous thankfulness of the heart. We may not know the ultimate origin of all these blessings, but we do not need to know; we are thankful for what they are and that they are. We need not be distinctly conscious of an object to which our gratitude is directed; it is more a state or temper of the heart than an address to such an object. To be sure, if we do associate a personal Author with the blessings, our gratitude may take on a personal form and utter itself in grateful language; but without this, it may be real and deep. If we see flowers by the wayside and have neither admiration nor thankfulness, it is not simply that we are not conscious of a personal Source whence they come, but that we are indifferent and thoughtless; but

if our heart feels their beauty and we reflect that they belong to an order not of our creation, an order that has created us and is thus prodigal in its blessings to us, we need no more to stir our thankfulness. And in such a mood, we do not ask, To whom may we be grateful? Gratitude itself is all. It need make no difference, indeed, if we discover that the flowers have had a natural origin, that their substance is common dust, that their colors are due to common air and light, that all the beauty of nature and blessings of life are not of chance formation, but are in accordance with law and wear an aspect of necessity. It is not the whence or the how, but the realities of themselves, for which we are grateful. If necessity is Mother of all things, feeling will not therefore check itself, but rather say, Fair and good and gracious is Necessity. We have said that the order of the world might be dwelt upon in such a way as to have little effect upon the feelings. But it is not so much what is positively presented as what is left unpresented, that is the cause of this. The order may be real, but it is not the whole reality; and it is the beneficent relations of the order to us that move us. It is thus that the scientific mood is not identical with the religious. In the former we view the world simply as an object, quite abstracting ourselves; but in the latter, at least in its first stages, it is just the relation to ourselves that interests us. Even if we adopt the theory of the personal origin of the world, we are not thereby made grateful. And even if to the bare intellect the extremest mechanical conception were the true one, though we deemed the course of events not only necessary, but the world absolutely blind, aimless, heartless,—yet if by any chance a humbler, less dogmatic mood should come to us, and we should feel life coming to us we know not whence, and pulses of joy beating within not of our creation, if the world should then seem fair and life blessed, we could hardly restrain some feeling akin to thankfulness. And this would not be substituting sentiment for reason, but would be simply reason leav-

ing its abstract and objective mode of view, and looking at things concretely and in their relation to us.

Gratitude, being thus connected with our immediate and experimental knowledge, and independent of theories as to the hidden nature and origin of things, may be safely left to its own impulses. Ordinarily it may be without utterance, simply a quiet sentiment coming to us now and then, when a moment's reflection realizes to us our dependence and the world's bounty. In some, and of a certain temperament, it may indeed feel utterance unnecessary and disturbing rather than helpful. And again, in more ardent temperaments, it may break forth in psalm and joyous canticle.

Plainly, then, we cannot consent to the opinion that gratitude without recognition of the Divine personality is unmeaning. We can readily see how it may be the opinion of the dogmatist who would forcefully impose upon us this recognition, or of one in the first despair of unbelief, before he has recovered himself and learned to trust in nature, or of the man indifferent to religion, who would seek a logical pretext for his indifference. But if we are true to our best instincts, we cannot allow it. Obligation is not limited to persons. Wherever something is received, there is a duty in return. We have no claim upon the mighty Nature which brought us forth: we are, so far as we are concerned, her free products, we are surrounded by her opulence, we are sustained by her bounty, and we neither can nor care to stay the filial gratitude that rises in our hearts.

SUBMISSION.

But the world is not wholly made up of things for which our first impulse is to be grateful. The sun, indeed, shines, and for all; but sometimes it shines too much, and at other times not enough, to correspond with our immediate wants. The rain descends upon the evil and the good, but at times it fails to bless either, and privation for some is the result. The air is common, yet it is sometimes moved with storm and tempest that bring destruction in their way. The earth is a solid footing for all, yet here and there it may open and swallow us up. The seas are generous highways, yet countless precious human lives are buried beneath them. And what of human life? Do we have all that we want? Are we not often denied cherished hopes and baffled in our endeavors? Not only what we want, but what we seem really fitted for, does not hard circumstance sometimes keep away from us? And then, what talents are misdirected, what capacities undeveloped! What gropings in the dark are there, what longings never to be met, what ideals luring us on yet ever eluding our grasp! How often are evil propensities developed and good intentions nipped in the bud! How often is generosity met with coldness! How do sensitive souls suffer, where the rude and coarse are light and bantering! Friendship is sweet, yet to be almost friendless is sometimes a good man's lot. And how do pureness and truth sometimes awaken all the demons of ill-will in the low and vile! Home is dear, yet to how many is the word only a vague memory or perhaps even a blank! And all homes are sooner or later broken, into them all some sorrow enters, death takes one member after another. Yes, to ourselves comes, at his own time, the fatal messenger, and from all that is bright and fair and real to us takes us away.

What shall we say of these things? They are not surely as we would have them, and on first thought our feeling is far from one of gratitude. They do not, however, counterbalance the positive blessings of life before mentioned. The world is not more evil than good, or equally one and the other; we believe it is on the whole and for most persons good. Drought, tempest, pestilence, earthquake, disaster at sea, are not the rule but the exception. We all wish for more than we have or are, but in most cases the actual of itself is an abundant ground for thankfulness. Misfortune, accident, sickness, come to us, but, save in rare cases, they serve to darken only temporarily what are in the main tolerably happy lives. Sorrow, trials of mind and heart, burdens of soul come to us, but, save where they are cherished, we cannot believe they become natural and habitual to more than a few. Death comes, but shall we not therefore be grateful for life? There may be rare instances in which life is hardly a blessing, its evils outweighing its good; but to the vast majority, even to those whose good and ill are nearly balanced, we believe life is something dear: they would not willingly give it up; while it lasts they have hope; and even the past with its mingled shadow and light they would hardly lose wholly out of their remembrance. And further, let us beware of saying that the evils we have mentioned are absolutely evil. For how can we know this? Evil they are in relation to us; as such they are real. But that they are evil in every relation can only be known if we know every relation; and hence such an assertion savors more of haste and passion than of calm reason. How do we know but that in some of the relations with which the wide universe abounds these evils may be good? yes, how can we deny that in relation to us, at some time and in some way, they may prove to have been not without blessing? What other attitude, then, is so natural as one of submission? For, in the first place, what avails our rebellion? We rebel against what is stronger than we. For we do not refer

to imaginary evils or to such as are only possible in the future ; we must do all we can to prevent evil, all we can to repair or mitigate it ; we refer to the actual, to what is left after all our effort and all our sympathy have spent themselves, and to future ill, only as it is clearly seen to be inevitable. And what are we in the face of reality ? If our strong hand and will cannot avail, of what use are our petulance and rebellion ? What of honor, what akin to bravery, is there in allowing such feelings ? Does not the strong man say rather, If I cannot remove fate, I can bear it ; easy and weak it is to repine,— I will show my strength by quietly submitting ?

But further, let us remember that every event, whether in external nature or in human life, has its place in the universal order. The world is all of a piece ; nothing stands isolated ; everything, however small or however evil, has relations reaching out into infinity. This that now distresses me is the result of forces and conditions that are essential to the integrity of universal Nature. Nothing comes of chance or wilfulness or caprice, unless it be a direct infliction of human hands. By reflection we must thus unlearn any rebellion. We see that it means narrow-mindedness and selfishness. How can I demand that all things revolve about me and conspire for my good ? Has, then, the world, that stretches out into infinity and goes on to eternity, no better end than me, or even than man, as at present constituted ? And have I no universal sympathies, no piety ? My ill may be merely mine and another man's good. Or it may be the ill of one generation, and some coming generation may be the better for it. Or it may be common to all humanity and in all time ; even if so, it may be good in wider relations, and in any case it is in some way necessary to the constitution and course of things. The individual can have no ambitious claims. All that he has he has received, and he may well be thankful. But because there are limitations, because of his own life there is beginning and ending

and mingled weal and woe in the interval between, shall he cry out? No; as all individual existence is transitory and subject to the action, now favorable and now unfavorable, of forces other than itself, the pious heart asks in favor of itself no reversal of the universal law. Rather is the spirit of piety just the opposite of this. Its inquiry is, not how much can *I* wish for and attain, but what is the law and will, so to speak, of the Powers above me? It passes out of the regards that centre in self, and seeks to conform itself to the Universal order. Piety is devotion, loyalty, and links man in self-surrender and obedience to a supreme object of affection. I have desires, it is true, and they are sometimes strong, and it seems hard to put them down; but I remember the Powers greater than myself, and in whose hands I am, and I feel there is no single private good so great as that of conscious harmony with them. I had rather receive from them than grasp too eagerly for myself; and if they deny me, though it be hard, I will still loyally say, Their will and not my own be done. To receive with thankfulness is indeed good, but there is involved in it no strain,—it furnishes no test of the strength and completeness of our devotion. But when we no longer receive, when denial is meted out to us, and what we would have is made impossible and what we already have is taken away from us, then, if we can loyally bear and submit, we are not far from the height of piety.

And further, this submission is not without a happiness of its own. It is, in the first place, a giving up of happiness, a resigning of what one wishes to the ordering of a Higher Power; but, as if in return for such high virtue, there comes in upon the soul, gradually it may be, yet surely, a peace and joy such as the actually meeting of one's wishes could hardly have produced. We do not attempt to explain this, and would not be understood to ascribe any special supernatural origin to the feeling; it no doubt arises naturally. We only refer to the fact. It is a reality in the moral order,

— which, along with the physical, goes to make up the entire order of the world,— that along with submission, and the more so the more complete submission is, there goes a happiness second to none we can possess, and before which our ordinary pleasures and satisfactions may seem poor and superficial. Yes, this happiness may even rise to thankfulness. One whom we cannot more admire for intellectual subtlety than for saintliness of spirit* has written, after recounting the various blessings which naturally awaken gratitude :—

“ Yet, Lord, in memory’s fondest place
I shrine those seasons sad
When, looking up, I saw Thy face
In kind austerity clad.

“ I would not miss one sigh or tear,
Heart-pang, or throbbing brow ;
Sweet was the chastisement severe,
And sweet its memory now.”

Such is the transmuting power of the human spirit ; so is ill patiently and humbly borne turned into good and blessing, awakening a noble thankfulness. And though to the height and serenity of such an experience we may not all of us rise, yet in some measure and degree are we not acquainted with it? Has not sorrow, when not rebelled against, softened and subdued our hard and worldly hearts? Has it not given us new insights and deeper sympathies? Have we not thereafter seemed to have a finer ear for the “ still, sad music of humanity,” and felt a deeper and tenderer love for our struggling, often weary and stricken, fellowmen? And if we have rightly taken the trials and disappointments of human life, if we have met them humbly and bravely, have not they in turn given us fresh strength and courage, made us see that life and happiness are more than meat and raiment or any outward blessing, made us feel the largeness of the Divine resources, and trust the more in that mighty Heart which

* John Henry Newman.

never takes one good away without holding out a higher and a better? What ill, indeed, can do violence to the submissive spirit? There are many evils which I cannot conquer, but there are none to which I cannot submit. Sickness, pain, remorse, bitter failure, may come to me,—let them come! Yes, even death may lose its sting and the dark grave be shorn of its victory; for we may covet no single good of life, and not life itself, so much as harmony with the world's order. Our wishes are particular and finite, but our submission makes us one with all that is or may be, and lifts us, as it were, out of our human restlessness into the infinite calm of God. If, then, we would have a sure and even happiness, I know not how we may so well secure it as by cultivating the submissive heart. We may not deny our desires: we may cherish those which are pure and worthy and seem to be in the line of the world's Providence. But beneath all particular desires there may be an undercurrent, a deep desire stronger than they all. Our special wishes may change, and some may be as short-lived as the wavelets of a stream; but we are not disturbed: our truest and deepest selves move ever silently and strongly on in their appointed course. If, as we go on in life, we meet joy and gladness, if circumstances smile upon us and opportunities to realize all we wish are given us, we are yet not elated, but humble and conscious of greater obligations. But if at some time the joys of life are taken from us, if the heavens seem to have lost their light and kindness, if Providence seems fate and fate stern and hard, we shall none the less accept this, content to do without joy, willing to go on without the favor of outward skies, and joining hands with fate with no grief or repining. And if we continue in such brave submission, sooner or later time will prove that we have not really forsaken joy, but have found better joy; we shall feel that Heaven's grace without we might well relinquish to find the sweeter and Diviner grace within, and fate shall become transfigured, and in it we shall almost think we see the face of God.

Plainly we cannot surrender the truth and naturalness of all this because we fail to give an affirmative answer to a great philosophical question. For as it shapes itself to our minds, the personality of God is such a question. We are not the better for believing in it, or the worse for failing to believe, and, as with any other problem for the intellect, should decide in regard to it on solely intellectual grounds. Disbelief may indeed sometimes spring from moral causes. The world may seem to some persons so full of evil, the onward course of things so hard and ungracious, their own lot so poor and mean, that they cannot believe a God of wisdom and love is ordering all ; and so a willing submission becomes impossible. But with such disbelief we have little in common, and indeed regard it as less true than the opposite positive belief. For the error contained in the latter, if error it be, is superficial and relates only to a matter of philosophical interpretation ; while the truth contained in it—namely, that the world is at heart good and naturally awakens thoughts of Infinite Love and Wisdom—relates to matter of fact, is vital and profoundly practical. If we deemed the order of the world inconsistent with an origin in such Wisdom and Love, neither could we be rationally or willingly submissive ; for it would thus be below our highest thought, and, however great and powerful, we could not help viewing it as beneath us. But the world is rather in our conception worthy of the highest origin, and that we do not so explain it is simply that the whole matter of an origin is a perplexing problem to us. Its actual character, however, as good, as fitted to the highest growth of our spirits, and often as better than our own wishes and wiser than our own thoughts, we assent to ; it is, indeed, the basis of all that we have said.

And in this connection we may see some meaning in the opinion that faith in God has a moral basis. For God is to many not a metaphysical conception, but the Good, the good around us and above us and not of our origination ; faith in Him is a sense of good and blessing diffused through all

things. And such perception is conditioned on our experience. If we are self-willed, the world may not seem good to us, for it often goes against our will; if we make great demands, we may think it stern and cold, for it is often deaf to them; if we sin, we may think it even remorseless and cruel, for in some way it will punish us. But if our hearts are set on the right, if not self-will but conformity is our vital thought and motive, then all things seem to turn to our account: good beams upon us from what is dark and evil to most men; trials have a hidden strength, disappointments an unexpected blessing; and for all of duty that we do there is a rest and joy of mind that makes us feel the world is on our side. It is in this sense that the secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and that to the pure in heart is granted the beatific vision. And we should think this view of the world, instead of being regarded with hostility, would be welcomed as consistent with, and indeed favorable to, Christian Theism. Surely the intelligent Christian does not base our duty of submission on the fact that God made the world, but that He made it good; and here we, though ^{He} looks upon it in its derivation and we as simply matter of fact, have a common ground. Goodness and what we must call reason are incarnate in the world or they are not; if not, or if we cannot in some measure see them, then faith in Divine love and intelligence is impossible; but if they are, then, whatever our speculative belief or unbelief, we have a reasonable basis for submission. And the latter recognition is ours. The dark side of the world exists indeed to us as to the Christian, but as he does not regard it as inconsistent with the ordering of Divine love, so is it to us not untinged with brightness. We too surrender happiness, and feel that there is another religion than that of nature and natural thankfulness: for us there is the strait and narrow way, the way of self-sacrifice and renunciation; but this to us also is not loss, but gain; life is not made less, but grows greater and richer; and the narrow way brings us up to mountain-tops, face to face with heaven's sun and with an infinite horizon.

PRAYER.

There are desires which beat hard against opposing reality. The desires for health, for wealth, for social standing, for intellectual culture, may for some persons and from various causes be impossible of gratification ; and, though plainly in themselves legitimate, when thus discovered to be impossible it is not wise nor in the spirit of piety to cherish them. But there are other desires meeting with no such insuperable barriers. The desire for purity of personal character, that we may be faithful, unselfish, above ill-will, jealousy, and meanness ; the desire for truth in the opinions we form; that we may be open-eyed and free from prejudice ; the desire for the welfare of our fellow-men, prompting us to generous efforts in their behalf ; and, above all, the desire to be conformed to the order and course of things, that we may do whatever comes to our hand, that we may bear patiently whatever burden is assigned us, that we may take our place faithfully, whatever it be, humble or great, beset with danger or commonplace, as true soldiers in the onward march of humanity,—these are desires which we may never disallow, and which the more we cherish and give free course to, the worthier we feel ourselves to be.

But to attain these objects of desire we feel ourselves at times insufficient. As our own characters we did not voluntarily make, as inward bent and outward circumstance contributed much, so now we cannot voluntarily change them : feelings that we do not will or wish rise up in us unawares ; circumstances are still often unfavorable and have their effect before we know it. Nor are we naturally open-eyed ; our minds are full of prejudices, inherited or of chance formation, and even when we will we cannot wholly divest ourselves of them. How small a part, too, can ours be in furthering the

welfare of humanity! how do conditions and deep forces, over which we have little control, restrain and retard us! and how often are we tempted to be impatient when we see how slow is the onward course of things, to be rebellious when too great a duty or too heavy a burden is given us, or to be petulant when necessity forces us to give up doing and turns us into idle spectators!

Surely, then, the objects of our desires are in other hands than our own. And if the desires are strong, if we feel them to be right and cannot put them down, what is more natural than the cry for help? We look to the Powers above us and pray that they will give us pure hearts and open minds, that they will do for our fellow-men what we fail to do, that they will give us strength for the part in life they have assigned us, and make us brave and humble and trustful. Such prayers are as natural almost as our breath; we cannot deny them, save as we either stifle our desires or deny the reality of Powers greater than ourselves. We may find many difficulties in understanding how prayer may be answered or is of any avail; but when the aspiration, the longing, arises within us, nature gets the mastery of us, and before we have time to think of the difficulties, prayer is going up from our hearts. Logical considerations are not the origin of prayer, and they are impotent to undermine it; they may sometimes strengthen, but they do not create, and if in some cases they seem to undermine, it is not so much their influence as the absence of the deeper moral impulses. We do not pray for answers to prayer; if we are in such a calculating mood, we cannot pray: we pray because we must, because our needs are great and we are conscious of our own inadequacy to meet them. If we do not understand how our breathing sustains the life, how the fine, impalpable air in answer to it enters into us and becomes health and color and vivacity, shall we therefore cease to breathe? Why, then, on the ground of our ignorance shall we cease to pray? Oh, we are in larger Hands than our own! And when shall we learn to yield to the wise

Nature that lies within us? when shall we see that our poor intellects but play on the surface of what passes their knowledge? and when shall we have a larger logic, which shall not prescribe to nature, and allow this and reject that, but base itself on the whole, and be only anxious that it overlook not or fail to justify one single element of the Divine totality?

And as to the logical difficulties, what are they? Natural law, it is said, is invariable and cannot be broken. We may pray, but there are actual forces, which with their conditions produce all the varied results of the world; and prayer cannot disturb these forces. And this is as true in the mental and moral as in the outer world. Force is constant, law is supreme everywhere; so that spiritual blessings are determined apart from prayer just as much as physical. The truth of all this in a general way may be conceded; the error lies rather in the application to the matter in hand, and especially in the superficial conception of prayer involved. Prayer, then, is not a force: a hand, a limb, a plant, a stone,—these are real, they stand for real forces; but prayer is but a word, a whisper in the wind. Can our hearts allow this? What is more real within us than our desires,—what more determines the outward actions, our relations to those about us, our whole life, than these secret inward desires? In truth, rather than unreal, they are the most real, because the most original, forces in human life. But prayer is desire in its most intense form. If we are indifferent, we may not pray; but if desire grows strong, prayer is hardly less than a necessity. Here, then, we have an anomaly,—other forces, even unmoral and inanimate, are real and have their effects; but prayer, standing for one of the deepest forces we know of, is isolated and effectless!

But it may be said: Prayer is in its nature an appeal to other force than itself; so far as it produces its own effect, we allow its reality and worth, but it is the supposition of its influence on anything beside itself that we object to. But the action of forces is various. One force acting upon

another may not produce the effect out of itself, but liberate, as it were, the energy stored up in the other. When a barrier is taken away from a body of water, an amount of energy is displayed by the rushing stream quite surpassing the mere force that lay in the barrier. When you are in distress and go to a friend for sympathy and help and get them, you cannot be said to create those blessings. Yet such sympathy and help are real, and in them we do not recognize any violation of law or inconstancy of force. What, then, must the objector say? Man can hear and answer us, but the Powers above man, who created him and made him all that he is, cannot; they who made the ear cannot hear, from whom the human heart comes cannot sympathize, who made the strong hand and arm are impotent and bound. Can we assent to this? does it appeal to reason any more than satisfy the heart? We know little indeed of the Supreme Power; we may not assert that it has intelligence such as we have, or a moral nature, resulting from the long experiences of our own. But to assert it to be unintelligent and without heart or freedom,—is it not equally, yes, more presumptuous? We thus do violence to natural reverence, and that which is really above we place practically beneath us. No; if God is not as man, it is not that he is less, but more, than man. If he has not a nature as ours, he has one greater; not without intelligence and love and freedom; but possessing that of which our minds and hearts and wills are but poor and shadowy manifestations. We cannot, then, deny the impulses of our souls on the ground of these difficulties. We may not indeed solve all the problems they involve, but we can know enough to prevent our feeling any forceful hindrance to the free play of our natures.

But are we quite without experience as to the effect of prayer? In the sphere of external nature we may speak diffidently, as of events indeed in human life not our own. But we may readily conceive a possibility: if the world is the realization of a Divine thought, the desires of men may have

had an influence in the Divine determining of the course of events ; these events may be linked together by necessity and yet as a whole have a free origin,—as a man may build a house and make a special arrangement out of regard to the desire of some one who is to live in it, the whole process of constructing being yet in strict accordance with mechanical laws. And even if we fail to assent to so distinct a conception, yet, trusting as we must in some responsiveness in the Heart of things to our own desires, we cannot deny that it may act, not in conflict with mechanical laws, but from a stand-point above them and through them, as we ourselves do. To deny that there have been answers to prayer for physical or other non-personal blessings, is more than we can do ; the tracing up of their natural origin and showing their necessity does not suffice. But in the sphere of our own inward experience, what prayerful heart cannot give positive testimony ? When we have humbled ourselves and sought Divine strength, have we not received it ? When life's duties and burdens seemed hard, and life itself poor and scant in blessing, has not all sometimes, after a prayerful mood, been changed, the duties become easier, the burdens lightened, and cheerfulness and hope awakened within us ? Have we not ourselves tried it,—by force of will to put down unworthy elements in our nature, and been unsuccessful ; and then, in some quieter, humbler mood, simply opened our souls to heavenly influence and felt all that we longed after silently becoming a part of us ? So true is it, that, “Left to ourselves, we sink and perish ; visited, we lift up our heads and live.”

We may not know what God is, but this we do know : that a Spirit sometimes comes to us which moves us to all that is true and good ; it takes away our selfishness and awakens impulses to all that is generous and noble ; it melts away our hardness and makes us tender and gracious ; it divests our minds of prejudice and passion, and, if we will only yield to it, guides us into all truth ; it nerves us for all arduous duty ; if we are dejected it lifts us up, and if we are lonely and

heartstricken it solaces us and gives us almost a sense of Divine companionship. We may call this Spirit what we will,—Nature, World-soul, Holy Ghost, God. The name matters little, but the reality is all ; and to be filled with it, we can call no less than the supreme blessing of human life. But what are the conditions of its coming? For come it does ; it is not ourselves,—it visits us. And further, it is not subject to our control ; we may not compel its presence by word of command or act of will.

“The Spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.”

But so far as we can detect the law of its action, does it not seem to come in response to our humbler, prayerful moods, when we are yearning after better things, when, far from feeling self-sufficient, we open the doors of our souls and entreat sweet heaven’s grace and light to enter in ; and does it ever come to us when we are self-elated, contented with what we are, without longing or aspiration?

Prayer, then, is not so much a matter for us to speculate upon as one upon which our higher moral life depends. If we are prayerless, and of course I mean not simply to outward appearance but as an inward reality, it must be that we are unconscious of our Divine connections, that we are isolating ourselves and becoming self-centred, that desire is fading out of our hearts, that we are forgetting to what heights of character and what depths of experience we may reach, and are becoming content with what is sordid and commonplace. And to be prayerful,—what is it but to know and measure ourselves as we really are? to believe in higher things than we have yet attained to? to open our souls and receive the Spirit of all good and blessing into them?

And we cannot give up all this because we fail to assent to the personal conception of the Supreme Powers. Only deeper causes can make it impossible for us to pray, as deeper causes are at the root of prayer itself. Desire is the

fountain of prayer, and if it fails we cannot pray, however favorable our intellectual conception ; and if it wells up within us we shall pray, though the conception be apparently unfavorable. For we take no account of the view that the Powers of the world are positively malevolent,—one that in health and sanity we can hardly entertain ; and that there are no Powers greater than ourselves, only the utterly thoughtless can affirm. We do not overlook the fact that the personal conception is the one most favorable to prayer, or deny that when first it loses its hold upon the mind prayer becomes difficult and even perhaps apparently unmeaning. There must be time for all changes, and readjustment is a gradual process everywhere ; but when we do recover our balance and get back to nature, we see that the springs are still there, that our desires we cannot stifle, and that only as we take an unworthy view of the whole order of things can we forbid their spontaneous rising and utterance. And when we give our prayerful impulses free play, we see how naturally they give a personal form to their object. And so there comes to us the discovery that feeling, so far from being limited by conception, is sometimes the source of conception. We may not indeed deny our impulses or refuse to allow the natural forms which they create. “In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity ; yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color.”* Yet we may not make of this temporary result of impulse a permanent element in our creed ; the intellect must shape the latter and the forms of impulse may themselves change, and what is natural in connection with one stage of culture may be no longer so in connection with another. But the real nature of prayer cannot change ; not so long as man has desires reaching out beyond himself and beyond his own power to satisfy, as he realizes that he is a part and a dependent part of the great Whole, and does not deny the natural bond of faith that is in him.

* Emerson.

FAITH AND HOPE.

Partly as involved in the experiences already mentioned and partly as bred by them, there arise faith and hope. Faith is hardly so separate and distinct a thing as gratitude or submission or prayer; it rather accompanies and gives tone and color to these special experiences, and is brought into separate existence only when we resolve them into their elements. It is not entirely born of our individual experience, and often our first experiences tend to check it; but it may be the result of unnumbered experiences of men in the past,—as it were, their subtle essence and breath. It is not identical with knowledge, though it is often a spur to knowledge; it tends rather to surpass knowledge, and without restraint becomes credulity. It has more than one stage. In the child it is almost unconscious; we call it innocence. Yet plainly it is real: the child does not believe that any one can harm it; it looks out confidently on scenes before which we rather tremble; it knows nothing of the world or its forces or of man, and yet it looks for good and not evil everywhere. This good, too, is not general,—for of such a conception it is not capable,—but personal, good in relation to itself. But as life advances and knowledge grows, it sees that the world contains mutually hostile forces, and that many things are evil in relation to itself; faith then receives a check, and the child begins to gauge the world according to knowledge, and sometimes its experiences may be so trying, circumstances may so thwart and frown, that it almost gives way to despair. But a total loss of faith is probably rare: most men believe there is more of good than evil; their trust as shown in their relations in life is in general more than their knowledge; and if not now and in these circumstances, then in the future, the good they want they believe

will come. And with growing thoughtfulness our faith impels us to ask what these evils really are,—whether after all they are not in some way good. And reflecting that fire and water, which often injure human life, are also necessary to it, that storms purify, that wars not only devastate but in the end often civilize,—finding, too, in our own experience how hardships have increased our powers of endurance, how disappointments in one direction have led to successful efforts in another, how suffering and sorrow have quickened our nobler sympathies and enlarged our knowledge of the world,—we do not feel faith becoming less, but growing greater; we become conscious of larger meanings in the conception good, and, from what we know trusting for what we do not know, we have a dim but glad surmise that all things in the wide universe are in some relation helpful. And we may take one step further. Lifting ourselves gradually out of a merely personal consciousness and sympathy, we may so continue until the Universe itself in its entire actual order becomes the supreme object of our regard. Though, after all the good we have discovered, there remains some evil which we cannot turn into good, and the impossibility of whose being so converted we may allow, we will not on that account cry out against the universe or presume to say that it ~~were~~ better if that evil did not exist; but rather better is it that it does exist, better is a world with mingled shadow and light than one of unclouded brightness. And such evil may not merely be for our contemplation, but may seize hold of us. Sickness may prostrate us and death stand before us ready to cut us off from all we longed and were prepared to do, and we may see no good to ourselves or to any one else in our untimely end, and there may be none: yet life has been a blessing, every day of it we are thankful for, and the end itself is not arbitrary, but has its place in and goes to make up the world's order; and the World is more than we, its ways are greater than our ways, and we still give it the loyalty and allegiance of our hearts. Evil viewed in

these world-relations is no longer evil; the untimely comes at its own best time: for we have no private good or desire,—the world and we are one. And thus it is that faith comes full circle; all things are now good, not only in general but in relation to us, and we return, though with consciousness and enlarged vision, to the simple confidingness of the little child.

But it may be asked, Does not faith involve more than this,—not only that we call the world good, but that we attribute its goodness to the love of an intelligent Creator? The latter conception may not be scientifically verifiable, but is it not a characteristic of faith to accept what cannot be proved, and thus, though we cannot know God, ought we not to believe in Him? Surely here are two meanings of the word faith, which we must distinguish. On the one hand, it is something intellectual; we have conflicting evidence in regard to a matter and cannot know for certain; however, the mass of evidence seems to incline in one way, and we say, Though we do not know, we yet will so believe. Belief is the better word for such a state of mind. But faith, as we use it, is primarily moral; like belief, it is not knowledge and tends to surpass knowledge, but it is a state or temper of the heart rather than an intellectual condition. It may have an influence upon the intellect, but to attempt to positively construct a theory of the world would be quite deserting its proper function. And what is apt to be forgotten is that the supposition of Supreme Love and Wisdom creating and ruling the world is such a theory, involving conceptions of dependence and causation and design, of which faith knows little, and in regard to which it would be idle for it to affirm or deny. Faith is concerned simply that the view of the world be not an unworthy one. For, being a sort of loyalty, it cannot consent that its object be placed beneath itself. If the world must have an origin, faith will distrust any one assigned that seems low; and if the choice be between love and malice, or wisdom and blind chance, it will not hesitate

on which side to range itself. If the goodness of things were wrapped up with any theory in such a way that to doubt the theory would be to cast an imputation on that goodness, then would faith unhesitatingly accept it. But some of us do not feel the necessity of supposing that there was an origin of the world such as was believed in former times ; to us the world stands firm of itself. And further, we do not see that the goodness of things calls for such an origin,—why to suppose it necessary and intrinsic is not as worthy a view as to regard it as contingent and derived. We are equally concerned to believe the best things ; our difference from the past results simply from a difference in intellectual conditions. The spirit of the Christian belief we may still sympathize with ; for, an origin of things being taken for granted, the highest conceivable origin was assented to ; the best attributes of our own nature, stripped of all limitation, were ascribed to the Author of the world. And if our faith cannot take this form, it is not that we would think less worthily, but that our conception of the constitution of things is changed, and that moreover we do not know that intelligence and love are the highest possible things, that there may not be something overlapping and dwarfing these as we can think of them, as these surpass the instincts of creatures below man:

Faith being thus a sentiment, and as such entitled to a free development, though not to a taking upon itself of the functions of the intellect, let us consider its relations to the sentiments and experiences before spoken of. Plainly it is involved in our submission and our prayer. We give up our private wishes and will, not simply because we are compelled to, but because of our loyalty, which will not allow that, besides being mightier, the Supreme Powers are not higher and better than we. We pray not to that which is beneath us, but to what is above us, to what we trust in as not deaf or unsympathetic, to what as its offspring we cannot regard as without feeling or interest in us. We may

not be able to demonstrate this, but our faith, our reverential loyalty, would find anything less inconsistent with it. And is not faith also bred by these experiences? When in response to the renunciation of self and selfish aim, the identifying of our own will with the Supreme, we find a peace and joy flowing to us surpassing all we otherwise know, do we not seem almost to have insight into the Infinite Heart, and to be receiving a Divine benediction? And when our prayers leave us cheerful, hopeful, ready to do and bear with light hearts, can we resist the feeling that the Power in all things, if we will only consent to it, is working for our good? And the facts that awaken gratitude,—do they not also breed faith? This Universe that bore us, that gave us these wonderful natures, that surrounds us with such wealth and luxuriance,—is it not equal to all things? Nature toils not, nor does she spin; she does not look upon us with human eyes, or speak to us in human language: but she noiselessly accomplishes what we with all our talking and planning and toiling cannot equal; and the mystery of her working gives us strange confidence rather than fear, and makes us prophetic, expectant of untold and unthinkable results.

And what is hope but this prophetic aspect of faith? We know not the future, but our natural loyalty and our added experience make us hope for all things. Hope is our tribute to the inexhaustible resources of the world. We may not have what we want now, but we hope we shall in the future; or if not that special blessing, then something better. Yes, so untiring and persistent is it that when the present life seems insufficient to meet and fulfil it, it will assert a future life and there await a complete fruition. And the intellect may not deny the possibility of such future life. Knowledge is of the actual, and here has its limits. As from the inanimate has sprung the animate world, as from the brute creation, man, with his mind and freedom, why from the human race may there not be a still higher product? Hope may not dogmatically affirm, it may not influence the intellect to say,

I know ; but where knowledge is not, and may not deny, it may be left to its own impulses, and what seems most consistent with large and generous views of things may cherish. But hope must be tempered with a submissive spirit. None of the religious sentiments can be inconsistent with one another, but must rather confirm one another. Hope cannot make demands ; it cannot look up to the Universe and say, I want or I deserve, and therefore must have, a future life. It is rather such a faith in the bountifulness of the World that it looks for the free, spontaneous giving of the hoped-for blessing. Yet, if this is not a part of the Supreme ordering, if our personal existence is to cease with death, hope will not rebel, but cheerfully submit. More than all else, more than our private wishes, is to us the actual order ; and hope, even though it knew that there would be no future personal existence, would still not deny itself, but would go out in generous affection and confidence to those who will live on after us and to the yet unborn. Hope is not less, but greater, for losing its merely personal interest ; only then, indeed, is it religious and a part of piety.

Into the arms, then, of great Nature that bore us we confidently give ourselves ; heaven and earth and air that gave of their own to us receive us again ; the feeling heart, the thinking mind, came, we know not whence, and they go, we know not whither : but beyond the Universe we cannot stray ; nothing of us can be lost ; we are still parts of the blessed whole, and wherever we shall go, and whatever be and do, and though we be in utter ignorance as to this, we yield ourselves without murmur or distrust.

GOD.

It has perhaps seemed that our manner of referring to the object of the religious sentiments was uncertain and vacillating. Now it was Nature, now the World or the Universe, now the Powers above us or the Supreme Power, now and rarely it was God. But this shifting use of terms was not wholly unintentional. Each seemed natural in its connection, yet there was no essential reason why one should have been preferred to another. It was our purpose to show the natural strength of the religious sentiments, even in the absence of any elaborate conception of their object ; and moreover the terms, to our minds, are really interchangeable,—they denote, not different existences, but at most different aspects of the same existence. Let us try to state what we mean.

The sum of being is our starting-point,—what we immediately know and what is involved therein, that we hence mediately know. The grass, the earth, the air, the heavens, plant, animal, man,—these, looked at in their connections and interdependence, make up the world. But all these individual existences are, as such, temporary. They are and then cease to be ; even what seems most fixed and abiding—the everlasting hills, the heavenly bodies—science teaches us are continually changing, and have beginning and ending. But we refuse to believe that the sum of existence or force can be increased or diminished. There hence arises the distinction between the world as it seems and as it really is ; between phenomena and reality, manifestation and force. Phenomena may change, but real being is not changed ; force may have this or that manifestation, but itself is constant. Hence we may look on the world in two ways : either on its phenomenal or its real side,—as a series of manifestations, or on the force that is manifested. The manifestations

we know : the force we do not know save in and through the manifestations. We may not indeed assert that there is not more of force than is contained in the manifestations of which we know ; a suspicion and almost a confidence may be awakened that there is more, as we reflect that the world is larger, means more to us, than to the uncivilized man, and that even in recent years new manifestations have been discovered. But we may not say, nor have we any reason to suspect, that there is more of force than is contained in the sum-total of manifestations, known and unknown, or that would be known to a perfect intelligence. For what we mean by force is the ground of a manifestation, and without manifestation we have no reason for supposing the existence of force. But since these two aspects of the world are different, the one being outer, as it were, the other inner ; the one directly knowable, the other not so knowable ; the one temporary, the other constant ; the one derivative, the other original,—we may legitimately assign to them two different names, using the terms Nature, World, Universe, for the one, and God or Supreme Power for the other. But we are not at liberty, as the natural tendency is, from the two names to unconsciously infer two things ; we may not judge of the world in one way and of God in another ; we may not separate its laws and his will, or its realities and his designs, or speak of it as imperfect and Him as perfect. It is thus that reverence for it and Him are the same in kind, that gratitude and submission and prayer and faith and hope may have one or the other for their object. God is real only in the world, though the world may be more than we know, and the world is real only in God. But it may be asked, Why do we speak of force and God, and not of forces and Gods ? how do we know the unity of force ? We answer, In the same way that we know of the unity of the world. The world is to us absolutely continuous ; if there were a break anywhere, there would be no way in which to cross it, and our world would be simply what was on this side. But by its continuity, we do

not mean one of color or visible extension merely, but one made real by any sort of manifestation. Our real meaning is that force is continuous ; these various manifestations, even what are commonly called the various "forces," do not imply absolutely distinct realities ; they may possess it in different degrees and may regularly manifest it in different ways, yet force itself one cannot be said to possess more truly than another. But while we seem thus to be justified in the use of terms implying unity, we would not overestimate the practical importance of such terms. We may speak of the Gods or the Supreme Powers, and cherish perhaps as devout sentiment as is possible if we use the abstracter terms. It is only important that the terms stand to us for realities, for realities above us, on which we are dependent and to which we look up with reverence. For religion is not of the whole, but a part. It may have seemed to some that in identifying God with the sum-total of being, we make religion impossible, since we are then a part of God, and religion demands something separate from and above us. Stated without qualification, this thought may not be favorable to religion ; for religion is to an object, and must by its nature distinguish. But is it not necessary that we be dependent on the object, that it have a claim upon us ? What gratitude, what submission, could we have to something which was quite aloof and unrelated to us ? what meaning in prayer or faith, if our fate was in no way bound up with it ? And are not these conditions met by a consciousness of the part of its relations to the whole ? We divide the world into ourselves and what is not ourselves, and these two are not equal ; we have but a limited control over it, and it has an almost unlimited control over us ; it brought us into being, gives us the means by which we are sustained, and stands over against us, helping or hindering all our lifetime, and in the face of death it is not we, but it, that has the mastery. Practically, then, it is so great that we may call it supreme, and it is so nearly the whole that we may so think and speak of it. For the Not-

ourselves does not exclude the forces manifested in humanity ; our religion is strictly individual, and to each man God is manifested not only in nature but in the minds and hearts of men about him ; yes, humanity is to us the highest revelation of God. In times of darkness and trial we look instinctively for human help and sympathy ; the conscious mind, the generous heart, are the best blessings of which we know ; and even at ourselves, regarded in this Divine relation, we may not look without a certain reverence.

We have said that we may not know God as he is in himself ; yet there are certain general attributes and relations to us which we need not fail to recognize. He is eternal. This and that manifestation may arise and pass away, but he cannot be thought of as beginning or ceasing to be. The splendor of the grass may have its hour, the heavens may wax old as a garment, but growth and decay have no application to the Power which is so manifested ; it lives in the vigor and freshness of an eternal youth. He is infinite. We cannot conceive of the world as bounded ; for if bounded by something, something is beyond, and what we have conceived of as the world is not the whole ; or if by nothing, it is equivalent to saying that it is not bounded at all. But he is the inward and substantial side of the world. Hence further, he is omnipresent. There is no part of the world that he is absent from, no particle of dust that is too mean for him, nothing so great of whose greatness he is not the source. We may not escape him : though we go to the uttermost parts of the sea he is there ; the darkness cannot banish him ; there is nothing so complex and seemingly self-centred that is independent of him ; even our strong and self-directing wills are but the temporary hiding-places of his power. He is, too, if we take the world as the visible side of the great reality, and him as the invisible, the Author of the world. We have spoken of the world as self-centred, and have said that causation does not apply to it as a whole. But by the world we meant, not simply the appearances, but also the hidden

forces ; and it has been the current Christian belief that force was as much a creature of God as anything phenomenal,—that he is thus apart from the whole. In this sense, we know of no Author of the world. But plainly the appearances as appearances are dependent, not only upon one another, but also upon their hidden ground of reality. The grass depends not only on the earth and the air and the sky, but itself and they all, considered simply as so much color and extension and form, are nothing save as force or reality dwells in them. Indeed, if creation be not the origination out of nothing, but out of nothing aside from oneself, God may be called Creator of the world. There are not materials aside from him, which he deftly shapes, but he himself is all, and from the plenitude of his own being comes material and form ; man is not a manufacture, part of him Divine and the rest common earth and air, but a growth, and earth and air themselves are constitutive elements in his Divine descent.

But as to terms having a more personal meaning,—Lord, Father, Providence, the Righteous One,—what may we say ? In general, let us call to mind that in refusing to ascribe personality to God, we do not assert him to be impersonal. We have as little right to call the Power behind all phenomena blind, aimless, destitute of sympathy, and purely mechanical, as to ascribe to him the opposite human traits. The former are terms having meaning and application in the sphere of the lower phenomena of the world, and if there be a difference they are less applicable to God than the higher terms ; for the higher do not so much contradict the lower as supplement and include them : personal power is mechanical and something more. And if God, the ground of the whole series of manifestations, is not personal, it is not that he is less, but more ; not mechanical, but in some way including both, and larger and higher than either. First, as to the term Lord. That God is Lord in the sense of being arbitrary sovereign apart from the world, giving commands according to his pleasure, and rewarding or punishing as he likes, is an altogether

unverifiable conception. But is this element of aloofness and arbitrariness the fundamental one in the ordinary Christian conception? Is it not rather that he is Power, and Power controlling us, having laws the action of which we cannot escape, and which, whether we harmonize with or disobey, bring their sure appropriate results? And if it is these certain realities that are at the root of the conception, does not our recognition of the same justify us in the use of the term? That our destinies are not in our own hands, that there is a Lord and Giver of human life and happiness, may perhaps be called the first postulate of religion; it is indeed a presupposition without which none of the religious sentiments are possible. But if this term is suggestive of power, which need not be personal, is not Father suggestive of love, which must be so? Here again we question whether the personal as a purely objective factor is the fundamental one in the Christian conception; whether it is not the good fatherly relation in which God stands to us that is really at its basis. But whether or no, I see not how we can deny to ourselves the use of this term when we consider the actual facts of our experience. What God is in himself we do not know, but the relations which he sustains to each one of us are akin to those of a Father to his child. Of what else are the facts suggestive that awaken our gratitude? He begets us, he sustains us, he gives us more than is needful or than we deserve. Though we are evil and unthankful, he does not forget us, but by the largeness of his bounty would seem to be ever drawing us to himself. It is true that he at times, and not rarely, denies us; but if we submit to him, we come to believe that after all the denial was for our good, and that our best happiness in life is not in possessing this and that thing which we crave, but in the identifying of our will with his. We pray to him filially and trustfully, and he answers us at times better and more wisely than we prayed. We believe in him loyally, we trust for all good at his hands, we resent all 'unworthy views of his ordering and Providence, and we hope,

not only in this life, but for that which is to come. How could we act more as children, how could he seem to us more as Father, than is in accordance with these facts? A conscious love such as is in us may or may not direct him in all this; we only know that a love, however wise or great, could not guide in wiser or better ways than are actual. But does not Providence imply distinctly knowledge and even pre-vision? Etymologically, it may; but such a consideration does not determine real and present meanings. Providence is provision, care, or that which supplies such provision and care. This provision may be made with consciousness and forethought or not; if not, it may be still real and have all the qualities that consciousness could originate. Now we are provided for in this world. The Powers above us do more for us than we for ourselves. Not only do we receive life and sustenance, but for how much of our happiness and success are we indebted to circumstances which we had no hand in making! Sometimes each step in our life seems to unconsciously prepare for the next; experiences that seem useless at the time, and hard to bear, pave the way for rich blessings. Providence has this real and practical meaning to most men; it is not a metaphysical theory,—it stands for the actual facts of the world and of human life, which they are sure are under a control not their own. And thus, what does a denial of Providence mean but that man is self-sufficient, that he orders his own steps, that all the good he has is of his own getting? what is it practically but to deny that there is any power beyond himself? But perhaps most difficult of all is to apply to God any moral term; and not merely because of uncertainties of language, but because it is so difficult to connect with him any moral conception. Morality is to us a human product. If society and human experience were not, we could little account for it and the term would have little meaning. And recognizing its natural origin and history, it is no longer to us a special revelation of the Divine will. Righteous and just in one sense we may indeed assert God to be, in that he follows up actions good and bad with their

appropriate results. However conscious we may be in what we do, we cannot be said to design or will all the results that follow. The action is ours : the consequences belong to an order which we do not control. A good action brings after it a train of blessings which often surprise the doer. A wrong action is sometimes attended with disastrous results before which we simply stand in dismay. But by a righteous God we mean one on the side of righteousness. He follows up actions with results ; to one class, which we call right, he gives happiness ; to another, which we call wrong, sooner or later unhappiness. But it may be asked, How is happiness any more to God than unhappiness? do not both go to make up the world, and is he not the God of the whole? Dogmatism is here surely out of place, and our answer may be far from satisfactory ; but we may attempt one. We can hardly help forming a conception of an end to which any combination of forces is tending. As the plant, the tree, the animal, seem to have a certain form or type after which they are shaping themselves, and to which they, as it were, strive till they attain it, so there seems a certain perfect form to which man is tending. Man does not know all of his possibilities ; with every onward step the consciousness of new possibilities is awakened : yet there is a certain goal which more or less clearly and fully is ever before him, and in view of which some things are desirable and others undesirable. Whether these be the whole or not, man feels himself to be formed for happiness and society ; to these ends he is ever tending,—progress he always recognizes to be in the direction of more and higher happiness and of more perfect society. And to assert that these are after all not ends at all, is to introduce a lie into the nature of things,—something which neither reason nor piety is willing to do. It is not merely we, but the Power of the world, that is moving us on to these ends ; we do not make them, but feel them to be there already, and that our part is in a conscious harmony with the Divine movement. Yet if these are real ends in the nature of things, righteousness stands on a different level from unrighteous-

ness, and the Power which presses us on to their attainment must be differently related to the one and the other. Righteousness is harmony, unrighteousness, when conscious and deliberate, is rebellion ; the former brings happiness and makes society possible, the latter brings in one way or another misery, and tends to the disintegration of society. In this way, then, we may not unreasonably entertain the conception of God as on the side of righteousness and as opposed to wickedness ; for these ends are not ours merely, but his, and to suppose him indifferent to the means whereby they are accomplished or hindered in their accomplishment, is to place him not above but below the feeblest work of his hands. Whether these ends are consciously held and planned for, as is the case with ordinary human ends, or whether there are such sensations of pleasure and displeasure as arise in us when our plans are in the way of success or failure, may be an open question ; but that the ends exist and that the order and movement of things are conspiring to their accomplishment, we can hardly doubt as we reflect upon our own inward impulses and survey human history.

It may be asked, Why, if throughout we so hesitate to ascribe personality to God, do we use the personal pronoun in speaking of him ? We answer that really it is a matter of indifference. When the word "God" is referred to, we naturally say "he" ; but if Power stands in the immediate connection, "it" is more natural. The religious sentiments do not depend upon the use of one more than the other ; though, naturally personifying, as they do, the object to which they direct themselves, they may prefer the personal term. But if it be meant that we have really no right to the use of this term, we must call to mind that we do not deny personality, that we regard God as revealed in the whole of his creation, that the human personality is not more but less than He, and that "it," used generally in reference to phenomena below man, is not more but less applicable in accordance with our view.

CONCLUSION.

Our object in these few pages has not been speculative, but practical ; not to meet the intellectual difficulties of the age, but to show the naturalness and strength of certain religious sentiments, despite the difficulties. Intellectual implications these sentiments have, and, though not fully or systematically, we have in a measure stated them. Religion cannot be separated from knowledge ; it is rather bound up with our surest knowledge. Were we not conscious of our dependence, we could have none of the religious sentiments. But though thus furnishing an occasion, knowledge cannot be called the origin of religion ; it is rooted rather in feeling and has thus a method of its own, and, we may add, should be judged of by a larger logic than is applied to the operations of the intellect. If it does not become inconsistent with knowledge, it may be allowed its own natural development.

There is, then, a ready inference as to the manner in which we may cultivate religion. It is not so much by purely intellectual considerations as by an awakening and quickening of the moral nature. We may have ever so correct a theory of the constitution of the world, and yet, without a sense of our dependence and of the world's goodness, we cannot be grateful. We may admit the reasonableness of submission, yet without the humble spirit we cannot truly submit. We may have a favorable theory of prayer, yet, without the yearning desire, we cannot pray. Faith and hope may seem legitimate to us, but if the loyal, reverent heart is not in us faith and hope can find no place. And how, indeed, are these feelings so effectually awakened in us as by contact with the same as they exist in others ? How do we learn to love? By studying its nature and origin, by having it im-

pressed upon us as a duty, or by actually mingling with those whose words and looks are ever manifesting it? So we learn to be grateful by associating with grateful, joyful hearts. We learn submission by seeing humble souls about us who do and bear their part faithfully, or by hearing or reading of the sainted who have gone before. We feel desire kindling in us as we know it stirring in the hearts and see it lightening the faces of others near us. We catch faith and hope as by inspiration from the believing, hopeful souls whom a good Providence makes it our lot to meet. And from this dependence of feeling on feeling, there comes the necessity that religion be social, that we link ourselves to one another, and cherish our connection with the current of faith and life that comes to us from the past.

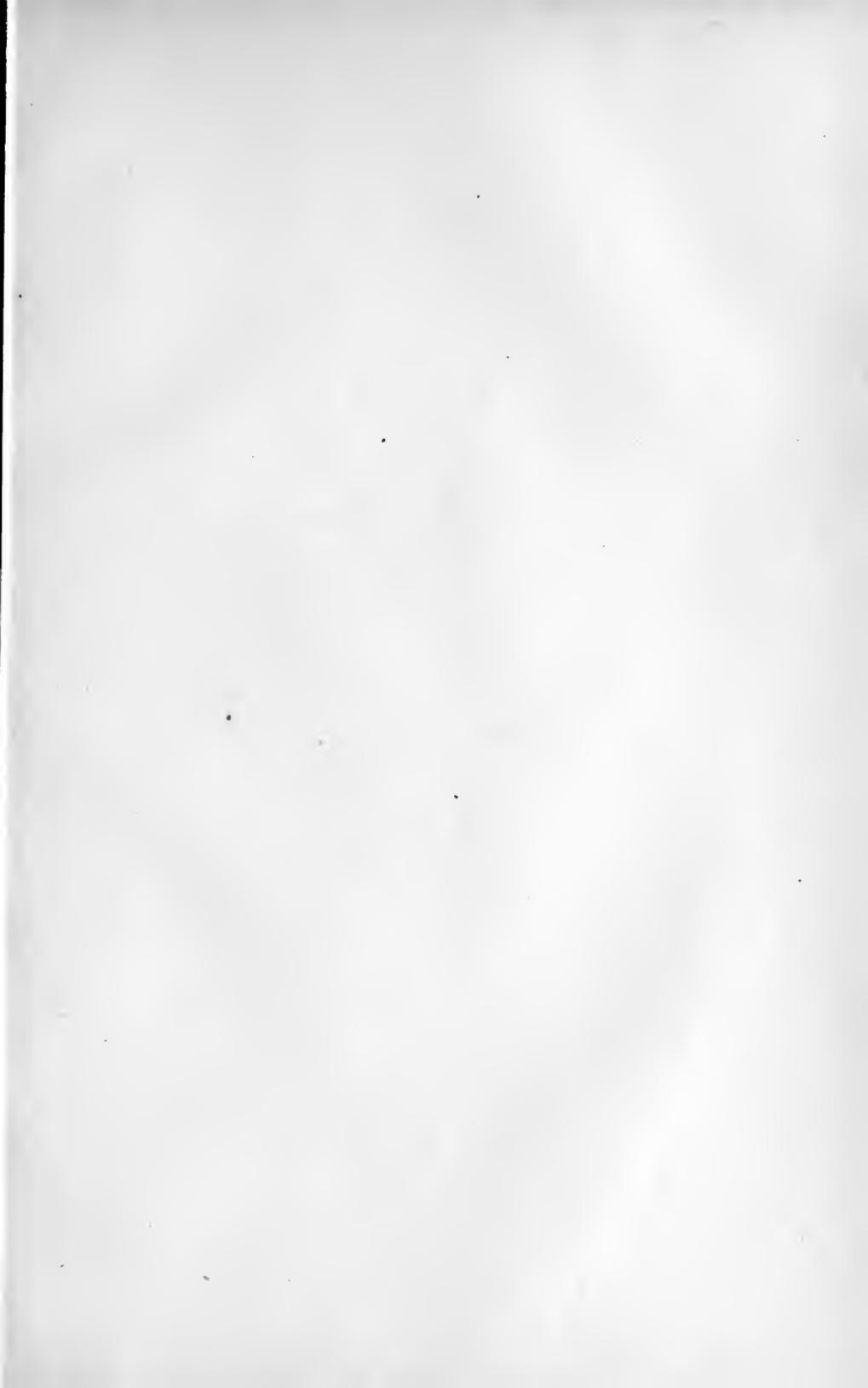
We have entitled this essay, "On a Foundation for Religion." We are far from imagining that we have presented the whole of religion. In its complete development, to a full knowledge and a ripe experience, religion would be something far more involved and complex, having wider relations to the intellect, and connecting itself in one way and another with the whole of human life and duty. We have not, indeed, presented the whole of a foundation for religion: there are the sentiments of love, of worship, of penitence, that have hardly been mentioned; and righteousness, almost the fundamental, practical conception of the Christian religion, we have hardly more than referred to. It is plain, then, that the title did not give rise to the book, and we confess that it seems at times a little ambitious; we can only plead the difficulty we have had in finding any other not too cumbersome, and may say that the sentiments we have discussed are at any rate a large part of the foundation of religion, and that, as being sentiment, they are distinct from the intellectual conceptions in which many would find the foundation. There are those at the present time whose all-absorbing inquiry is, What is the nature of the Deity? Is he conscious or is he not, has he love or is he

without it, is he free or is he bound up in the necessitated order of nature? Religion is supposed to hinge upon an answer to those questions, and so long as we cannot give an affirmative answer we must give up all religious sentiment. It was our object to recall from so dreary a state of mind, to show the naturalness of sentiment simply in view of what we know, and to lead to a trusting recognition of this, in the absence of the ordinary intellectual conceptions, as a real foundation for religion.

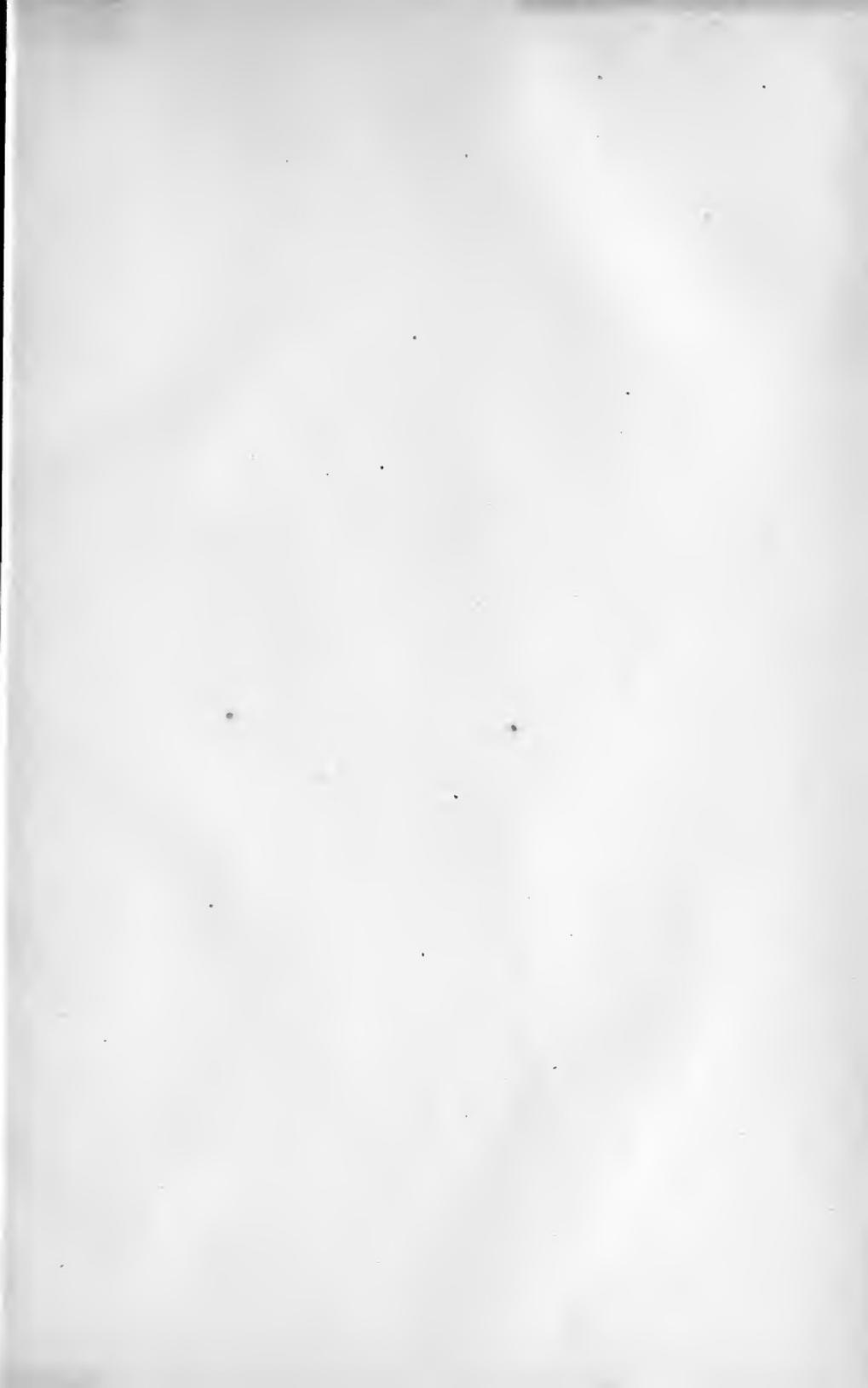
And in what has been said we can recognize nothing hostile to the essential import of Christianity. Even its doctrinal part we do not deny, but feel simply that it is beyond us and without recognizable connection with any sure thing which we know; and it is possible that further knowledge and deeper reflection would lead to a substantial belief in it. For though the conception of God as an individual apart from the world has been the current one, it is not the real foundation of Christian theology; the Power *in* the world, of which the world is simply the manifestation, the outer side, the body as it were, may be personal,—that is, intelligent and free,—and such personality, rather than the attendant notion of a separate individual existence, is the vital basis of the Christian system; such a conception has not been infrequent in the history of Christian thought, and is perhaps at the present day gaining prevalence among Christian thinkers. But the immediately practical part of Christianity, we have not only not denied, but positively affirmed. Christianity, as other religions, is a product of the religious sentiments, and it contains these in a more highly developed form than we elsewhere know of them. If we would cultivate these sentiments, we know not how else we could so well do so as by receiving into ourselves the Christian Spirit as it comes down to us and is embodied in the Christian Church to-day. All along there has been a grateful recognition of the Power above us, a trustful submission to the dispensations of the Providential Hand, a spirit of prayer linking man in affec-

tionate confidence to the Unseen, a faith which looking out on the world could say Father, and a hope which neither life nor death could destroy. In the Church, we are, as it were, bathed by this Divine atmosphere ; out of it, is it not generally coldness and hardness and insensibility that we meet with? Indeed, this atmosphere does so infect and give color and life to many of the Christian doctrines that we can hardly say we disbelieve in them, or make any assertion in regard to them, without much qualification. We do not assent to the Fatherhood of God, taken as a term for metaphysical personality ; yet as a matter of faith and experience, and as expressing the real relation in which the world stands to us, we do assent to it. The Holy Spirit, viewed as an element of an involved theological conception, we are ignorant in regard to ; but what Christian does not mean by it first a reality in his heart, and have not we ourselves asserted a spirit that may lead us into truth and make us holy? The Divine forgiveness and grace may cause us much perplexity, if we seek to settle all the hard problems which they have suggested to the mind of the Church ; but may we not ask, Are they to this end intended, and do they not in any case stand for some of our truest and deepest spiritual experiences? Salvation through Christ,—how can we deny it, when the first impulses to a religious life sometimes come from reflection upon his teaching, his life, his passion and death? Is he not still to us the true Son of God, in that he possessed a filial consciousness which for completeness and depth has, so far as we know, never been surpassed, and into the spirit of which we would fain be baptized?

Christian, then, we may be rightfully called or not ; we shall not discuss the question. But if not, it must not be that we make any hostile attack upon Christianity, but have rather retreated to its heart and centre.









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